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Commissioner

North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Veterinary Division

R. Douglas Meckes, DVM
State Veterinarian

September 2, 2015

To: North Carolina Poultry Producers Raising Organic Birds with Outside Access

From: R Douglas Meckes, DVM
State Veterinarian

Sarah J Mason, DVM, PhD
Director Animal Health Programs, Poultry

RE: Notification and Biosecurity Recommendations regarding the continuing outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

Given the late 2014 and frequent 2015 occurrences of HPAI in the western and mid-western United States and the identification of cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in 21 US states affecting commercial poultry, HPAI remains a significant threat to organic producers due to the required outside access. Epidemiological reports confirm that the virus is carried by certain types of wild migratory waterfowl that have been present in the Pacific, Central and Mississippi flyways. Given that the Mississippi flyway encompasses a portion of western North Carolina, and cases in Ontario, Canada involve the Canadian Atlantic flyway, flocks in our state that may contact wild migratory waterfowl or their droppings are at high risk. The southern migration of wild birds from Canada is beginning, increasing the likelihood of exposure of US poultry to HPAI. To attempt to mitigate that risk we are strongly recommending the following steps be taken for the protection of flocks with outside access:

1. Move all poultry with outside access into biosecure housing immediately.
2. Implement strict biosecurity on these premises. Alert all company personnel, growers, farm workers and service personnel of the increased risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. Especially focus biosecurity methods on preventing any exposure to wild waterfowl or their droppings.
3. Monitor all flocks for increased mortality or clinical signs consistent with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, and report any concerns to your Veterinarian, State Animal Health Official or Federal Animal Health Official immediately. The consistent clinical sign in all the current reported cases to this point has been a marked rapid increase in mortality over several days.
4. Please contact us with your questions or concerns.